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FM REO BASRAH

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0544

RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BASRAH 000044

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/24/2017

TAGS: PGOV PNAT PINS I2

SUBJECT: GOVERNOR, POLICE CHIEF REPORTED TO BE SACKED

REF: (A) BASRAH 38, (B) BASRAH 40

CLASSIFIED BY: Louis L. Bono, Director, Regional Embassy Office
Basrah, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) Rumors abound in Basrah May 24 that Basrah Governor Mohammed al-Wa'eli and Basrah Chief of Police Mohammed Hammadi al-Musawi are about to be sacked. According to former Basrah Governor Hasan al-Rashid and other sources, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has decided to remove the governor from office but has not issued a written order. Al-Rashid, one of al-Wa'eli's main opponents, has been negotiating for the governor's removal, offering in exchange to consider another member of the governor's Fadhila party as a replacement. Basrah Council member Aqeel Talib of the Fadhila party said the rumors of the governor's imminent removal are just that.

¶12. (C) The governor returned to his office in Basrah following meetings with the Prime Minister in Baghdad. For several months, al-Wa'eli has been facing votes in the Basrah Provincial Council and street demonstrations to leave office. (See Ref A.) The governor and his Fadhila party rejected the demands, saying he is the democratically elected office holder. Twenty-seven of the 41 members of the Basrah Provincial Council have voted to remove the governor. The governor's supporters say that figure falls short of the two-thirds majority -- 28 -- needed to oust him. His opponents say that only 39 members of the council are empowered to vote, so 27 is one vote above the needed two-thirds majority. (Note: The governor and deputy governor are non-voting members of the Provincial Council. End note.) Fadhila intends to contest attempts to oust the governor. Fadhila claims that some Provincial Council members were forced to vote for the governor's removal under threat of death. Fadhila is trying to convince three Iraqi National Accord members to travel to Baghdad to advise the Prime Minister that their votes were under duress. The house and car of one of the INA members were reportedly shot up this morning.

¶13. (C) Reports on the sacking of Basrah Police Chief Mohammed Hamadi al-Musawi carry more detail. The Deputy Interior Minister in charge of Police Affairs, Aidan, informed REO Basrah that an informal decision to remove the police chief was taken one week ago when three Interior Ministry envoys from Baghdad were kidnapped in Basrah while investigating security conditions in the province. (See ref B.) Interior Minister Bolani and eight members of the Council of Representatives in Baghdad are reportedly planning to name a successor to the police chief as early as May 24, according to Aidan. Sources say a leading candidate for the next Basrah police chief is Iraqi Coast Guard Brigadier Abdul Hakim. The sources describe Hakim as respected and independent and say that he has done a good job rebuilding the Coast Guard. Nevertheless, the vast amounts of oil that are smuggled through ports near Basrah give rise to suspicions that he maintains links with militias. Aqeel named other candidates

for the job as Brigadier Yousif and Brigadier Edan. However, he claims that the Provincial Council, not the Prime Minister, will have the final say on who gets the job.

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